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Wildlife Services: A Fresh Approach

It is a real pleasure to appear before the Western Association of State Game and Fish Commissioners. I have been friends, or associated with most of you for many years.

Much has now been written and said about the new look in animal control, but I think we had better wait now for some specific and major accomplishments before exercising that subject further. I will be brief in bringing you up to date; then I want to move to the other two new functions of the Division of Wildlife Services.

As you probably know, the Leopold Report was accepted on June 16, 1965, by Secretary Stewart L. Udall, as a guidepost to future animal control policy. On June 18, 1965, the Division of Wildlife Services officially came into being. This marked the beginning of a very exciting time in the conservation movement -- at least, more than exciting for me.

Here was a new Division -- a new unit of government, with a charter to change the direction of a 50 year past, and launch into the future with two new functions. It began with the full support of the Bureau, and of the Secretary's office. It was watched eagerly by several

publics. It began its work in a most favorable climate. I must admit that during the ensuing year the road has sometimes been rocky, but this was expected, and we will not be turned from our course.

We have made some changes in animal control that I will not enumerate here. Major instruments of change have involved three training sessions for orientation purposes; a short course in Texas; a short course at Utah State University; and an intensive, two-week session at Bowie, Maryland. We really assembled a lot of talent for that session. In addition, individual employees have taken courses and there have been several conferences throughout the country. Obviously, we are giving strong emphasis to training, orientation, and education.

Along with the extension type eastern program, we have continued to run the operational animal control program in the west. This has sometimes been a difficult process. Coyote numbers seem to be on the increase, bringing greater demands upon our personnel for more intensive control.

And, without elaboration, there have been strong pressures and counter pressures.

I would like to share a problem and a thought with you. Director Gottschalk, Assistant Director McBroom, and I have been criticized for trying to talk to several groups at once, assuring each of many

things -- particularly that we would continue with the animal control program -- in other words, "talking out of both sides of our mouth."

Those critics have been absolutely correct -- we are talking and acting for as many publics as have an interest in our work. I think this is part of the democratic process. We can no more devote our full energies to serving only the Wool Growers than we can stop our work to satisfy the extreme protectionist groups. We must serve the fish and game departments, the rice growers of the southeast, the Air Force, the Indians of New Mexico who suffer with plague, and many others. We are trying, to the best of our ability, to be honest with each group and to discharge our responsibilities to each. So, to the critics who have made this accusation, we can only say "thank you for making it clear."

I know you are especially interested in how the so-called "new look" in animal control affects the State fish and game departments. The effect may be appreciable in many ways.

We cannot and will not delude ourselves -- or you -- by trying to justify coyote control in areas of deer abundance. Many western States make substantial contributions to the animal control program, and for good reason: in some cases, the State feels an obligation to help the rancher finance predator control for the protection of livestock.

This is a good will gesture, especially on private lands. We should and will be open and honest about this, and not try to get by with subterfuge. If the funds are made available to assist landowners in protecting domestic animals, and if there is need for protection this is sufficient, though it may well be a public relations gesture. If it is for game protection, this is another matter.

We are willing to conduct control operations in some areas for the protection of newly introduced animals; or, in some cases, where animals are in short supply and need an assist to get over the survival threshold. We will conduct control for the protection of rare and endangered species. Rodent control is one tool often important in range management and reforestation. In all of these cases, the important criteria is whether the control is necessary and can be justified biologically.

This year, for the first time, we are requiring formal plans of work for our program in each State. Our field personnel will be working with cooperators in developing these -- including the game departments. If you have a resource program requiring animal control, it should be incorporated in the plan. Incidentally, we think this is a progressive step.

Before going on, I would like to share several thoughts:

We are not "shopping around." We have quite enough problems without seeking others. And facetiously, we don't want to invade States'

rights in the matter of animal control, although the "pests" seem to have fallen into the Federal bailiwick.

Now, a word about bounties. We--the Bureau--seem to get a great deal of credit for bounties. We are not engaging, and do not intend to engage, in the use of the bounty system as a means of suppressing an animal population. Further, we do not believe it to be a useful animal population management tool. Experience in many States over a long period of time has demonstrated its inadequacies.

Let the record show that we do not favor the bounty system and that we encourage States to abolish it as an animal control tool. The Bureau is looking over its position very carefully in relation to the control of animals upon which the States have placed bounties. The degree of Bureau participation under these circumstances is doubtful at this time.

To sum up, there are situations where animal control is a valuable wildlife management tool--and situations where it is wholly unjustified. In cooperation with your State Fish and Game Departments, we hope to identify both situations as we conduct our program on the most responsible basis possible.

Let's turn to the wildlife resource enhancement phase of the program. This, along with the pesticide surveillance function, really came

into being only in March of this year when reprogrammed funds became available. We are not trying to build an empire, duplicate anyone else's efforts, or compete with any existing organization. In fact, this would be impossible. We now have only six men -- one for each Regional Office and one in the Central Office. Obviously, they are not going to do much field work. We think that they can be most effective by assisting other agencies and this will be an important duty.

Before getting into detail on wildlife enhancement, let me make a philosophical comment: the presence of wildlife, especially a diversity of species, is an indication of a healthy total environment. This itself is justification for wildlife. Beyond this, and equally important, is the fact that those interested in wildlife, and in our total environment, are better off because of the experience. Their interest is an indication of a healthy mental outlook. Some of us manage wildlife per se; especially those that provide recreation. But, some of us would like to consider animals because of their importance in the environment and because of the impact they have on people.

Our goal, through influence and persuasion, and by using all means at our disposal, is to make an imprint on the minds of men. We intend to mount a crusade to develop an ecological conscience among the people.

Suppose, for example, that we could convince farmers that they should have wildlife on their land as part of the American scene, and as a part of the fabric of the American resource. We are not naive enough to think that this will be an easy task. We are shooting for the large goal of maintaining a diversity of wildlife over the entire landscape -- on private and public lands -- in the country and in the city.

We want to work with that great mass of people in the East that enjoy wildlife just for the sake of wildlife. For those of you who have not experienced this great interest, it is hard to believe. The backyard wildlife enthusiasts deserve some help and recognition and we intend to provide it. In the formal language of the game manager, these are the non-consumptive users; to the cynics, these people are dicky-birders, or emotional old ladies with binoculars.

To any thinking manager, these people, whether on the farm or in the city, hold the future of countless millions of birds, and other wild animals in their hands. They add up to roughly 1/3 of the people of the United States.

Let me add a personal note. My wife and I have become backyard enthusiasts -- we have a bird bath and three feeders. A great diversity of birds, along with squirrels and chipmunks provide us with enjoyment every waking hour.

We plan to provide direct technical assistance, under several circumstances, especially on Indian and military lands. Here are millions of acres of lands where the potential of the wildlife resource lies dormant, largely because technical assistance is not available. Here are lands that can provide added recreation; and, in the case of Indian lands, yield added (and much needed) income. Again, this will be done only where the service is not already being provided.

Now turning to pesticide surveillance. Again, we must work through others because our staff is limited to six men. We really have two basic objectives. One is to determine pesticide-wildlife relationships and prevent adverse effects; and the second is to participate in the National Monitoring Program, which, as you know, is intended to participate in a national effort to measure annually, at various fixed locations, the pesticide residues in the environment.

We propose to work with others and to interest others, but of course, we will do some field work of our own -- working closely with the Division of Fishery Services -- but, for our main strength, we must rely on others -- for a main example: You.

We don't want to get into this business of making a surveillance, seeing a dead robin, and damning all pesticides; nor, do we want to give a pesticide the stamp of approval simply because we don't see



any dead animals. The disasters of catastrophies are obvious for all to see. We want to learn about the long-range and subtle relationships. We want our results to stand the scrutiny of the scientific community and industry. There have been enough half-baked efforts, and we don't intend to add to them. A major aim will be to head off problems, not document failures.

We are just beginning to get off the ground; and we are not gaining momentum. The Division of Wildlife Services means exactly what it says. It is a Division of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, designed and intended to provide wildlife services. We are looking forward to working with the State fish and game departments and other organizations. We have an enormous amount of work to do -- important, new, challenging, and sometimes, controversial, but the way is clear, and our determination is unswerving and enthusiastic.